

THE
COMPLAINT:

OR,

Night-Thoughts

ON

LIFE, DEATH, & IMMORTALITY.

Sunt lacrymæ rerum, & mentem mortalia tangunt. VIRG.



L O N D O N :

Printed for R. DODSLEY, at TULLY's Head in *Pall-Mall*. 1742.

[Price, One Shilling.]

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T H E
C O M P L A I N T.

NIGHT the FIRST.

T H' R' D nature's sweet Restorer, balmy *Sleep* !
He, like the World, his ready visit pays,
Where Fortune smiles ; the wretched he for-
Swift on his downy pinion flies from Woe, [fakes :
And lights on Lids unfully'd with a Tear.

From short, (as usual) and disturb'd Repose,
I wake : How happy they who wake no more !
Yet that were vain, if Dreams infest the Grave.
I wake, emerging from a sea of Dreams
Tumultuous ; where my wreck'd, desponding Thought
From wave to wave of *fancy'd* Misery, II
At random drove, her helm of Reason lost ;
Tho' now restor'd, 'tis only Change of pain,
A bitter change ; severer for severe :
The *Day* too short for my Distress ! and *Night*
Even in the *Zenith* of her dark Domain,
Is Sun-shine, to the colour of my Fate.

Night,

Night, fable Goddess! from her *Ebon* throne;
 In rayless Majesty, now stretches forth
 Her leaden Scepter o'er a slumbering world : 20
 Silence, how dead? and Darkness, how profound?
 Nor Eye, nor list'ning Ear an object finds;
 Creation sleeps. 'Tis, as the general Pulse
 Of life stood still, and Nature made a Pause;
 An awful pause! prophetic of her End.
 And let her prophecy be soon fulfil'd;
 Fate! drop the Curtain; I can lose no more.

Silence, and *Darkness*! solemn Sisters! Twins
 From antient *Night*, who nurse the tender Thought
 To *Reason*; and on reason build *Resolve*, 30
 (That column of true Majesty in man!)
 Assist me: I will thank you in the Grave;
 The grave, your Kingdom: *There* this Frame shall fall
 A victim sacred to your dreary shrine:
 But what are Ye? *Thou*, who didst put to flight
 Primæval *Silence*, when the Morning Stars
 Exulting, shouted o'er the rising Ball;
 O thou! whose Word from solid *Darkness* struck
 That spark, the Sun; strike Wisdom from my soul;
 My soul which flies to thee, her Trust, her Treasure; 40
 As misers to their Gold, while others rest.

Thro' this Opaque of Nature, and of Woe,
 This double Night, transmit one pitying ray,

To

To lighten, and to chear : O lead my Mind,
 (A Mind that fain would wander from its Woe,)
 Lead it thro' various scenes of *Life* and *Death*,
 And from each scene, the noblest Truths inspire :
 Nor less inspire my *Conduct*, than my *Song* ;
 Teach my best Reason, Reason ; my best Will
 Teach Rectitude ; and fix my firm Resolve 50
 Wisdom to wed, and pay her long Arrear.
 Nor let the vial of thy Vengeance pour'd
 On this devoted head, be pour'd in vain.

The Bell strikes *One* : We take no note of Time,
 But from its Loss. To give it then a Tongue,
 Is wise in man. As if an Angel spoke,
 I feel the solemn Sound. If heard aright,
 It is the *Knell* of my departed Hours ;
 Where are they ? with the years beyond the Flood :
 It is the *Signal* that demands Dispatch ; 60
 How Much is to be done ? my Hopes and Fears
 Start up alarm'd, and o'er life's narrow Verge
 Look down-----on what ? a fathomless Abyfs ;
 A dread Eternity ! how surely *mine* !
 And can Eternity belong to me,
 Poor Pensioner on the mercies of an Hour ?

How poor ? how rich ? how abject ? how august ?
 How complicat ? how wonderful is Man ?
 How passing wonder He, who made him such ?

B

Who

Who center'd in our make such strange Extremes? 70
 From different Natures, marvelously mixt,
Connection exquisite of distant Worlds!
 Distinguisht *Link* in Being's endless Chain!
Midway from *Nothing* to the *Deity*!
 A Beam etherial fully'd, and absorpt!
 Tho' fully'd, and dishonour'd, still Divine!
 Dim Miniature of Greatness absolute!
 An Heir of Glory! a frail Child of Dust!
Helpless Immortal! Insect *infinite*!
 A Worm! a God! I tremble at myself, 80
 And in myself am lost! At home a Stranger,
 Thought wanders up and down, surpriz'd, amaz'd,
 And wond'ring at her *own*: How Reason reels?
 O what a Miracle to man is man,
 Triumphantly distrest? what Joy, what Dread?
 Alternately transported, and alarm'd!
 What can preserve my Life? or what destroy?
 An Angel's arm can't snatch me from the Grave;
 Legions of Angels can't confine me There.

'Tis past Conjecture; all things rise in Proof: 90
 While o'er my limbs *Sleep*'s soft dominion spread,
 What, tho' my soul phantastic Measures trod,
 O'er Fairy Fields; or mourn'd along the gloom
 Of pathless Woods; or down the craggy Steep
 Hurl'd headlong, swam with pain the mantled Pool;

Or scal'd the Cliff; or danc'd on hollow Winds,
 With antic Shapes, wild Natives of the Brain?
 Her ceaseless Flight, tho' devious, speaks her Nature,
 Of subtler Essence than the trodden Clod;
 Active, aerial, tow'ring, unconfin'd, 100
 Unfetter'd with her gross Companion's fall:
 Ev'n silent Night proclaims my soul immortal:
 Even silent Night proclaims eternal Day:
 For human weal, Heaven husbands all events,
 Dull Sleep instructs, nor sport vain Dreams in vain.

Why then *their* Loss deplore, that are not lost?
 Why wanders wretched Thought their tombs around,
 In infidel distress? are *Angels* there?
 Slumbers, rak'd up in dust, Etherial fire?
 They live! they greatly live a life on earth 110
 Unkindled, unconceiv'd; and from an eye
 Of Tendernefs, let heav'nly pity fall,
 On me, more justly number'd with the Dead:
This is the Desert, *this* the Solitude;
 How populous? how vital, is the Grave?
This is Creation's melancholy Vault,
 The Vale funereal, the sad *Cypress* gloom;
 The land of Apparitions, empty Shades:
 All, all on earth is *Shadow*, all beyond
 Is *Substance*; the reverse is Folly's *creed*; 120
 How solid all, where Change shall be no more?

This

This is the bud of Being, the dim Dawn,
 The twilight of our Day; the Vestibule,
Life's Theater as yet is shut, and Death,
 Strong Death alone can heave the massy Bar,
 This gross impediment of Clay remove,
 And make us Embryos of Existence free.
 From *real* life, but little more remote
 Is *He*, not yet a candidate for Light,
 The *future* Embryo, flumbering in his Sire. 130
 Embryos we must be, till we burst the Shell,
 Yon ambient, azure shell, and spring to Life,
 The life of Gods: O Transport! and of Man.

Yet man, fool man! here burys all his Thoughts;
 Inters celestial Hopes without one Sigh:
 Prisoner of Earth, and pent beneath the Moon,
Here pinions all his Wishes; wing'd by Heaven
 To fly at Infinite; and reach it there,
 Where *Seraphs* gather Immortality,
 On life's fair Tree, fast by the throne of God: 140
 What golden Joys ambrosial clust'ring glow,
 In *His* full beam, and ripen for the Just,
 Where momentary Ages are no more?
 Where Time, and Pain, and Chance and Death expire?
 And is it in the Flight of threescore years,
 To push Eternity from human Thought,
 And smother souls immortal in the Dust?

A soul

A foul immortal, spending all her Fires,
 Wasting her strength in strenuous Idleness,
 Thrown into Tumult, raptur'd, or alarm'd, 150
 At ought this scene can threaten, or indulge,
 Resembles *Ocean* into Tempest wrought,
 To waft a Feather, or to drown a Fly.

Where falls this Censure? It o'erwhelms myself.
 How was my Heart encrusted by the World?
 O how self-fetter'd was my groveling Soul?
 How, like a Worm, was I wrapt round and round
 In filken thought, which reptile *Fancy* spun,
 Till darken'd *Reason* lay quite clouded o'er
 With soft conceit, of endless Comfort *here*, 160
 Nor yet put forth her Wings to reach the skies?

Night-visions may befriend, (as sung above)
 Our waking Dreams are fatal: How I dreamt
 Of things Impossible? (could Sleep do more?)
 Of Joys perpetual in perpetual Change?
 Of stable Pleasures on the tossing Wave?
 Eternal Sun-shine in the Storms of life?
 How richly were my noon-tide Trances hung
 With gorgeous Tapestries of pictur'd joys?
 Joy behind joy, in endless Perspective! 170
 Till at Death's Toll, whose restless Iron tongue
 Calls daily for his Millions at a meal,
 Starting I woke, and found myself undone?

Where now my Frenzy's pompous Furniture?
 The *cobweb'd* Cottage with its ragged wall
 Of mould'ring mud, is *Royalty* to me!
 The *Spider's* most attenuated Thread
 Is Cord, is Cable, to man's tender Tie
 On earthly blifs; it breaks at every Breeze.

O ye blest scenes of *permanent* Delight! 180
 Full, above measure! lasting, beyond bound!
 Could you, so rich in rapture, fear an End,
 That ghastly Thought would drink up all your Joy,
 And quite unparadise the realms of Light.
 Safe are you lodg'd above these rowling Spheres;
 The baleful influence of whose giddy Dance,
 Sheds sad Vicissitude on all beneath.
 How teems with Revolutions every Hour?
 And rarely for the better; or the best,
 More mortal than the common births of Fate. 190
 Each *Moment* has its Sickle, emulous
 Of *Time's* enormous Scythe, whose ample Sweep
 Strikes Empires from the root; each *Moment* plays
 His little Weapon in the narrower sphere
 Of sweet domestic Comfort, and cuts down
 The fairest bloom of sublunary Blifs.

Blifs! sublunary Blifs! proud words! and vain:
 Implicit Treason to divine Decree!
 A bold Invasion of the rights of Heaven!

I clasp'd

I clasp'd the Phantoms, and I found them Air. 200

O had I weigh'd it e'er my fond Embrace!

What darts of Agony had miss'd my heart?

Death! Great Proprietor of all! 'Tis thine

To tread out Empire, and to quench the Stars;

The Sun himself by thy permission shines,

And, one day, thou shalt pluck him from his sphere.

Amid such mighty Plunder, why exhaust

Thy *partial* Quiver on a Mark so mean?

Why, thy *peculiar* rancor wreck'd on me?

Infatiate Archer! could not One suffice? 210

Thy shaft flew thrice, and thrice my Peace was slain;

And thrice, ev'n thrice yon Moon had fill'd her Horn:

O *Cynthia*! why so pale? Dost thou lament

Thy wretched Neighbour? Grieve, to see thy Wheel

Of ceaseless change outwhirl'd in human Life?

How wanes my *borrow'd* bliss? from *Fortune's* smile,

Precarious Courtesy! not *Virtue's* sure,

Self-given, *solar*, ray of sound Delight.

In every vary'd Posture, Place, and Hour,

How widow'd every Thought of every Joy? 220

Thought, busy Thought! too busy for my Peace,

Thro' the dark Postern of Time long elaps'd,

Led softly, by the stillness of the Night,

Led, like a Murderer, (and such it proves!)

Strays, wretched Rover! o'er the pleasing *Past*,

In

In quest of wretchedness perversely strays ;
 And finds all Defart *now* ; and meets the Ghosts
 Of my departed Joys, a numerous Train !
 I rue the Riches of my former Fate ;
 Sweet Comfort's blasted Clusters make me sigh : 230
 I tremble at the Blessings once so dear ;
 And every Pleasure pains me to the Heart.
 Yet why *complain* ? or why complain for One !
 Hangs out the Sun his Lustre but for me ?
 The single Man ? are Angels all beside ?
 I mourn for Millions : 'tis the common Lot ;
 In *this* shape, or in *that*, has Fate entail'd
 The Mother's throes on all of woman born,
 Not more the Children, than sure Heirs of *Pain*.

War, Famine, Pest, Volcano, Storm, and Fire, 240
 Intestine Broils, *Oppression*, with her heart
 Wrapt up in tripple Brags, besiege mankind :
 God's Image, disinherited of Day,
Here plung'd in Mines, forgets a Sun was made ;
There Beings deathless as their haughty Lord,
 Are hammer'd to the galling Oar for life ;
 And plough the Winter's wave, and reap Despair :
Some, for hard Masters, broken under Arms,
 In battle lopt away, with half their limbs,
 Beg bitter bread thro' realms their Valour sav'd, 250
 If so the Tyrant, or his Minion, doom :

Want,

Want, and incurable *Disease*, (fell Pair !)
 On hopeless Multitudes remorseless seize
 At once ; and make a Refuge of the Grave :
 How groaning *Hospitals* eject their Dead ?
 What numbers groan for sad Admission there ?
 What numbers once in *Fortune's* lap high-fed,
 Solicit the cold hand of Charity ?
 To shock us more, solicit it in vain ?
 Ye filken Sons of Pleasure ! since in Pains 260
 You rue more modish visits, visit *here*,
 And breathe from your Debauch : *Give*, and reduce
Surfeit's Dominion o'er you : but so great
 Your Impudence, you blush at what is Right !

Happy ! did Sorrow seize on *such* alone :
 Not *Prudence* can defend, or *Virtue* save ;
 Disease invades the chastest Temperance ;
 And Punishment the Guiltless ; and Alarm
 Thro' thickest shades pursues the fond of Peace :
 Man's Caution often into Danger turns, 270
 And his Guard falling, crushes him to death.
 Not *Happiness* itself makes good her name ;
 Our very Wishes give us not our wish ;
 How distant oft the Thing we doat on most,
 From that for which we doat, Felicity ?
 The *smoothest* course of Nature has its Pains,
 And *truest* Friends, thro' error, wound our Rest ;

D

Without

Without Misfortune, what Calamities?
 And what Hostilities, without a Foe?
 Nor are Foes wanting to the best on earth : 280
 But endless is the list of human Ills,
 And Sighs might sooner fail, than Cause to fight.

A Part how small of the terraqueous Globe
 Is tenanted by man? the rest a *Waste*,
 Rocks, Deserts, frozen Seas, and burning Sands ;
 Wild haunts of Monsters, Poisons, Stings, and Death :
 Such is Earth's melancholy Map! But far
 More sad! this Earth is a true Map of *man* :
 So bounded are its haughty Lord's *Delights*
 To *Woe's* wide empire ; where deep *Troubles* toss ; 290
 Loud *Sorrows* howl ; envenom'd *Passions* bite ;
 Ravenous *Calamities* our vitals seize,
 And threat'ning *Fate*, wide-opens to devour.

What then am I, who sorrow for myself?
 In Age, in Infancy, from other's aid
 Is all our Hope ; to teach us to be kind.
That, Nature's *first*, *last* Lesson to mankind :
 The selfish Heart deserves the pain it feels ;
 More generous Sorrow while it sinks, exalts,
 And conscious Virtue mitigates the Pang. 300
 Nor Virtue, more than *Prudence*, bids me give
 Swoln Thought a second channel ; who divide,
 They weaken too, the Torrent of their grief :

Take

Take then, O World ! thy much-indebted Tear :
 How sad a sight is human Happiness
 To those whose Thought can pierce beyond an Hour ?
 O thou ! whate'er thou art, whose Heart exults !
 Would'st thou I should congratulate thy Fate ?
 I know thou would'st ; thy Pride demands it from me.
 Let thy Pride pardon, what thy Nature needs, 310
 The salutary Censure of a friend :
 Thou happy *Wretch* ! by Blindness art thou blest ;
 By Doatage dandled to perpetual Smiles :
 Know, *Smiler* ! at thy peril art thou pleas'd ;
 Thy Pleasure is the promise of thy Pain.
Misfortune, like a Creditor severe,
 But rises in demand for her Delay ;
 She makes a scourge of past Prosperity,
 To sting thee more, and double thy Distress.

Lorenzo, Fortune makes her court to thee, 320
 Thy fond Heart dances, while the *Syren* sings.
 Dear is thy Welfare ; think me not unkind ;
 I would not damp, but to secure thy joys :
 Think not that *Fear* is sacred to the Storm :
 Stand on thy guard against the *smiles* of Fate.
 Is Heaven tremendous in its Frown ! most sure :
 And in its favours formidable too ;
 Its favours here are Tryals, not Rewards ;
 A call to Duty, not discharge from Care ;
 And shou'd alarm us, full as much as Woes ; 340
 Awake

Awake us to their *cause*, and *consequence*, 330
 O'er our scan'd Conduct give a jealous Eye ;
 And make us tremble, weigh'd with our Desert,
 Awe Nature's tumult, and chastise her Joys,
 Left while we clasp, we kill them ; nay invert
 To worse than *simple* misery, their Charms :
 Revolted Joys, like foes in civil war,
 Like bosom friendships to resentment sour'd,
 With rage envenom'd rise against our Peace.
 Beware what Earth calls Happiness ; beware
 All joys, but joys that never can expire : 340
 Who builds on less than an *immortal* Base,
 Fond as he seems, condemns his joys to Death.

Mine dy'd with thee, *Philander* ! thy last Sigh
 Dissolv'd the charm ; the disenchant'd Earth
 Lost all her Lustre ; where, her glittering Towers ?
 Her golden Mountains, where ? all darken'd down
 To naked Waste ; a dreary Vale of Tears ;
 The great Magician's dead ! Thou poor, pale Piece
 Of out-cast earth, in Darkness ! what a Change
 From yesterday ! Thy darling Hope so near, 350
 (Long-labour'd Prize !) O how Ambition flush'd
 Thy glowing cheek ? Ambition truly great,
 Of virtuous Praise : Death's subtle seed within,
 (Sly, treacherous Miner !) working in the Dark,
 Smil'd at thy well-concerted scheme, and beckon'd

The Worm to riot on that Rose so red,
Unfaded e'er it fell; one moment's Prey!

Man's Foresight is *conditionally* wise;
Lorenzo! Wisdom into Folly turns
Oft, the first instant, its Idea fair 360
To labouring Thought is born. How dim our eye!
The present Moment terminates our sight;
Clouds thick as those on Doomsday, drown the *next*;
We penetrate, we prophesy in vain.
Time is dealt out by Particles; and each,
E'er mingled with the streaming sands of Life,
By Fate's inviolable oath is sworn
Deep silence, "Where Eternity begins."

By Nature's Law, what may be, may be *now*;
There's no Prerogative in human Hours: 370
In human hearts what bolder Thought can rise,
Than man's Presumption on To-morrow's dawn?
Where is To-morrow? In another world.
For numbers this is certain; the Reverse
Is sure to none; and yet on this *perhaps*,
This *peradventure*, infamous for lies,
As on a rock of Adamant we build
Our mountain Hopes; spin out eternal schemes,
As we the Fatal Sisters cou'd out-spin,
And, big with life's Futurities, expire. 380

Not even *Philander* had bespoke his Shroud ;
 Nor had He cause, a Warning was deny'd ;
 How Many fall as suddain, not as safe ?
 As suddain, tho' for Years admonisht home :
 Of human Ills the last Extreme beware,
 Beware, *Lorenzo* ! a flow-sudden Death.
 How dreadful that deliberate Surprize ?
 Be wise to day, 'tis madness to defer ;
 Next day the fatal Precedent will plead ;
 Thus on, till Wisdom is push'd out of life : 390
Procrastination is the Thief of Time,
 Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
 And to the mercies of a Moment leaves
 The vast Concerns of an Eternal scene.
 If not so frequent, would not This be strange ?
 That 'tis so frequent, *This* is stranger still.

Of Man's miraculous Mistakes, This bears
 The Palm, "That all Men are about to live."
 For ever on the Brink of being born :
 All pay themselves the compliment to think 400
 They, one day, shall not drivel ; and their Pride
 On this Reversion takes up ready Fraise ;
 At least, their own ; their future selves applauds ;
 How excellent that Life they *ne'er* will lead ?
 Time lodg'd in their *own* hands is *Folly's* Vails ;
 That lodg'd in *Fate's*, to *Wisdom* they consign ;

The

The thing they can't but *purpose*, they *postpone* ;
 'Tis not in *Folly*, not to scorn a Fool ;
 And scarce in human *Wisdom* to do more :
 All *Promise* is poor dilatory man, 410
 And that thro' every Stage : When young, indeed,
 In full content, we sometimes nobly rest,
 Unanxious for ourselves ; and only wish,
 As duteous sons, our Fathers were more Wise :
 At *thirty* man *suspects* himself a Fool ;
Knows it at *forty*, and reforms his Plan ;
 At *fifty* chides his infamous Delay,
 Pushes his prudent Purpose to *Resolve* ;
 In all the magnanimity of Thought
 Resolves ; and re-resolves : then dies the same. 420

And why ? Because he thinks himself Immortal :
 All men think all men Mortal, but themselves ;
 Themselves, when some alarming shock of Fate
 Strikes thro' their wounded hearts the sudden Dread ;
 But their hearts wounded, like the wounded Air,
 Soon close, where past the shaft, no Trace is found :
 As, from the *Wing* no scar the Sky retains ;
 The parted Wave no furrow from the *Keel* ;
 So dies in human hearts the Thought of Death :
 Even with the tender Tear which Nature sheds 430
 On those we love, we drop it in their Grave.
 Can I forget *Philander* ? That were strange ;

O my

O my swoln Heart! But should I give it vent,
 The longest Night, tho' longer far, would fail,
 And the *Lark* listen to my *midnight* Song.

The shrill *Lark's* sprightly Mattin awakes the Morn;
 I strive, with mournful : Melody to cheer
 (Grief's sharpest Thorn hard-pressing on my Breast)
 The fullen Gloom, sweet *Philomel* ! like Thee,
 And call the Stars to listen : Every star 440
 Is deaf to mine, enamour'd of thy Lay.
 Yet be not vain ; there are, who thine excell,
 And charm thro' distant Ages : Wrapt in Shade,
 Prisoner of Darkness ! to the silent *Hours*,
 How often I repeat their Rage divine,
 To lull my Griefs, and steal my heart from Woe ?
 I rowl their Raptures, but not catch their Flame :
 Dark, tho' not blind, like thee *Mæonides* !
 Or *Milton* ! thee ; ah cou'd I reach your Strain !
 Or *His*, who made *Mæonides* our Own. 450
Man too he sung : *Immortal* man I sing ;
 Oft bursts my Song beyond the bounds of Life ;
 What, *now*, but Immortality can please ?
 O had *He* prest his Theme, pursued the track,
 Which opens out of Darkness into Day !
 O had he mounted on his wing of Fire,
 Soar'd, where I sink, and sung *Immortal* man !
 How had it blest mankind ? and rescued me ?

F I N I S.

